

## Draft Talking points when advocating to remove mental health questions on credentialing and licensing applications

- Physicians are often reluctant to seek mental health care for many reasons, including concerns that doing so can affect their ability to keep their medical license or to be credentialed to practice.
- When medical license applications ask about mental health diagnoses, physicians are less likely to seek mental health care.
- States asking questions about mental health diagnoses on their applications are not following recommendations from the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), which recommends boards evaluate if they need to ask questions about mental health diagnoses, and if so, to focus on impairment.
- Asking about mental health diagnoses on a credentialing or licensing application may violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Asking questions about mental health has never been shown to improve quality or safety of care.
- The Joint Commission strongly encourages organizations to not ask about past history of mental health conditions or treatment, and has emphasized it is important to ensure health care workers can feel free to access mental health resources.
- Patients notice and care about physician well-being, and benefit from having mentally healthy physicians. Physicians having worse mental health may affect retention and recruitment, potentially affecting patient access to care.
- Organizations and regulatory bodies asking these questions may not be able to manage the volume of referrals since some residency programs make mental health appointments for all trainees.
- Our diverse physician workforce experiences uneven and inequitable challenges to mental health, and barriers to seeking mental health care may disproportionately affect women, people of color, and immigrants.
- Instead of asking about mental health care, state boards and credentialing committees can instead ask: *"Do you currently have any condition that adversely affects your ability to practice medicine in a safe, competent, ethical and professional manner?"*
- Credentialing committees and state medical boards can support physicians receiving mental health when needed by including supportive language such as: *"It is common for clinicians to feel overwhelmed from time to time and to seek help when appropriate. We emphasize the importance of well-being and appropriate treatment and support for all health conditions."*